

I entered Texas A&M unsure of how I could stand out among so many outstanding individuals. The thing is: I wouldn't have learned how to stand out as a leader if I attended a different university.

Here, I have built character and faced great challenges as a leader. As a current student, I have learned two significant lessons on leadership that I will carry with me as a former student.

In the fall of 2021, I involved myself in two areas I have formed a fond attachment: sports and the performing arts. In pursuing my passions, I applied to Rec Sports and became a trained softball official, and I joined OPAS as a general committee member.

I took a class on leadership that fall with General Van Alstyne. In a conversation with the general, I confessed that, while I love reading and writing, I am not a leader in the classroom. I never earn the highest exam scores, and I hardly finish at the upper end of grade distributions. The general assured me that when we are six feet underground, we will not be remembered for our academic performance. People will remember us for the strength of our character and how we stood up to life's great challenges. Leaders seek to better themselves and others in every avenue of their lives. This motivated me to study hard and lead in each of my organizations.

After a year of hard work at the plate, my boss at Rec Sports promoted me to a supervisor position. Since then, I have trained officials in softball mechanics and situational awareness, as well as to take pride in their work. In OPAS, the executive team appointed me to operations manager after a year of service. In this role, I facilitated operations of student volunteers before, during, and after performances. I also worked with production managers and Broadway performers, providing hospitality unlike anything they have ever experienced, for only A&M grants students the responsibility and autonomy of providing hospitality to patrons and performers.

After a year of serving in my managerial role, the outgoing student committee chair and OPAS executive director named me as Student Committee Chair for the 2023-2024 academic year. Honored, I had huge tasks ahead of me: to strengthen our committee's camaraderie and recruit more individuals to our organization. I thank another man for teaching me how to lead.

Last summer, Dr. John Sanchez taught me everything I needed to know about strategic management, promoting positive culture and change in your organization to meet strategic objectives. I utilized these lessons to assemble my executive team and divide tasks according to our strengths. Together, we better communicated the purpose of OPAS and its vision to the student committee, A&M, and the community. After shrinking to 26 members last season, OPAS has now grown to 69 committed members. At the annual OPAS gala this year, which raises money for bringing local youth to educational performances, we coordinated our student volunteers to maximum efficiency. Our committee sold 600 raffle tickets at the gala in the fastest time ever recorded. We raised \$275,000 for education outreach that night. I am the chair of a successful organization, but I'm not the sole reason for its success. I provided guidance when necessary, helping my executive team and general committee members discover their own strengths.

As a former student, I will dedicate my life to leadership. General Van Alstyne shared this perfect definition of leadership in class: 'Leadership is the art of influencing others to perform an objective or task with maximum efficiency.' There is an art to the way Aggies do things. It took the hearts and minds of many leaders to produce the many leadership outlets we have at A&M, such as Rec Sports and OPAS. I look to give back to A&M in that same way. I seek to develop our campus and its students in more ways than academics because this university did that for me.

When I'm an ol' Ag and someone asks me where I learned how to lead, what fueled my desire to dig deep into others and reveal their character, I will answer, "Texas A&M."